



House of Commons
Science and Technology
Committee

**Pre-appointment
hearing with the
Government's
preferred candidate for
Chair of the Medical
Research Council**

Second Report of Session 2012–13

Volume II

Oral evidence

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Science and Technology Committee

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Oral evidence

Taken before the Science and Technology Committee on Wednesday 11 July 2012

Members present:

Andrew Miller (Chair)

Stephen Metcalfe
Stephen Mosley
Pamela Nash

Sarah Newton
Hywel Williams

Examination of Witness

Witness: **Donald Brydon CBE**, Chair-elect of the Medical Research Council, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: First, may I welcome you to the hearing and explain the process? We have about 10 questions that we want to pose to you as part of our responsibility in the appointment process. I would like to start off by asking you about the way in which you came to take an interest in the vacancy. I saw the ad in *The Times*, I also saw it online and there were several other places where it was advertised. Did you apply for the job or were you approached?

Donald Brydon: Both. I also saw the advert, but I have stayed in touch with a number of people in the medical world ever since the time that I was chairman of Amersham. I spoke to one or two people and said, "What do you think of this?" They said, "We were thinking of giving you a call." It emerged that Professor Sir Keith Peters was particularly enthusiastic, and I asked Bill Castell's advice at Wellcome Foundation. So it all came together. I had been thinking about the structure of my life, because my life has been changing in terms of what I am doing. I wanted something that was different from the other things that I was doing and would take me away from the short-termism of everything else.

Q2 Chair: What, in particular, about the MRC do you find of interest?

Donald Brydon: It is impossible not to find human health of interest. I have a vested interest in that.

Chair: I think we all have.

Donald Brydon: But, also, the fact that it is thoughtful—I read the plan—and it is structured. I have always been fascinated as much by outputs as inputs. I had a vision, from years ago, that the research in this country was all being done very much on the basis of, "Let's do a lot of research." It goes way back to a visit that I made to Beechams in about 1977. I had a long talk with the head of research there at the time, and I asked him, "How on earth do you decide how to allocate your research dollars between different projects when you have very little idea of what the outcomes are going to be?" I am very interested in that subject, and that interest continued at Amersham because we were similarly research-challenged. To see how the MRC had moved in terms of measuring output and having a clear idea of the road map that it is following intrigued me and made it very interesting.

If you think about the things that I have done in my life, interacting with a lot of stakeholders has been the common theme which seemed to focus some of my strengths. If you add those together, and the fact that you are then doing something really worthwhile, it becomes quite an attractive proposition.

Q3 Stephen Metcalfe: Good morning. A lot of your most recent experience is commercial based and business oriented. What do you think you bring to the role, coming in from that kind of background? What skills are transferable?

Donald Brydon: A lot of what I have been doing has, effectively, been governance and leadership, and you are right to say that it was largely in the private sector. I am very pleased that you referred to it as "commercial" because that is not how it was described to me when I first started.

The chairman of any big enterprise has three key roles to play. One is to be the best possible support for the chief executive. That is about being—if I can put it this way—the chief executive's "best friend". It is not very politically correct to say it in that way, but it is the man who is willing to tell him when he is wrong as well as when he is right, help him in the dark moments and encourage, nudge, assist, question him and so on. That role is completely transferable, whether it is in a charity, a local authority, a research council or a major corporation. The second one is about structuring strategy. The process, again, for determining strategy is pretty common across most organisations. There are different strands to it, but the essential core is the same. The third one is around governance and making sure that the structures and processes are appropriate—getting the right assurances.

In all those cases, you have to remember that you are not the guy who is running it. Somebody else is running it and you are not the principal personality of the organisation. To be the chair is a curious role; it is to shape, nudge, help, drive and question. Those are transferable skills between the private sector and other businesses.

Stephen Metcalfe: Yes. Those three roles are very important in any organisation, regardless of what that organisation pursues.

Donald Brydon: I think, in this organisation, there are probably a couple of extras. That is to say, there is more stakeholder involvement in this organisation

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than there would be in Smiths Group, for example, and there is probably a greater advocacy role here. But that is true if you think about what I have been doing for the last three years with Royal Mail. A lot of that has been advocacy directed at Westminster in its widest sense, and at the other stakeholders—the regulators, the consumer focus groups and so on—because, without the buy-in, we would not have made the progress we have. The same would be true, I suspect, of the MRC.

Q4 Stephen Metcalfe: Do you see any major differences between chairing a research council as opposed to chairing a business-oriented organisation?

Donald Brydon: I remember my first board meeting when I joined Amersham as a director, before I became chairman. They were talking about genomics, and I didn't know very much about genomics. I went away and got a textbook and read up on the subject as fast as I could. At the second board meeting, one of the Swedish professors said, "That's it. Genomics is dead now. It is all proteomics." I had this feeling of great collapse. I am not sure that sitting among a group of highly qualified scientists is going to be easy. On the other hand, business people bring a different perspective, and I am not coming in to bring the medical perspective.

Q5 Chair: At least you will realise our difficulty in keeping up to speed with every discipline of science that this Committee encompasses.

Donald Brydon: Absolutely. Generally, you can reduce most of these issues to quite common sense things. In Amersham, my way of dealing with that was to say, "Wait a minute. If we make it and sell it for more than it cost us to make it, we will make a profit. That's what we are trying to do." In that sense, you can break it down. In this case, the fact that there is a road map for research and a proper holding to account of the people doing it and so on, means that you can ask the same sort of questions. It may not have precisely the same profit motive attached to it all the time, but the goal of reaching some objective is similar.

Q6 Stephen Metcalfe: I have one final quick question. I noticed that you are a rugby fan.

Donald Brydon: Yes. I used to be in the days when Scotland used to win all the time.

Q7 Stephen Metcalfe: So if France and England are playing, who do you support?

Donald Brydon: My wife is English.

Stephen Metcalfe: That was a very diplomatic answer. Thank you.

Q8 Stephen Mosley: In your previous answer you talked about the role and the interaction between the chairman and the chief executive. I did see your chief executive nodding while you were answering that question.

Donald Brydon: That's good.

Q9 Stephen Mosley: He is sitting behind you and he hasn't got the knife out yet. If there were

disagreements between the two of you, how do you think you would handle that?

Donald Brydon: I have been through that. I do not want to upset the putative chief executive, but I have fired two or three chief executives over the years. The first thing to do is to have a strong relationship. I remember asking a chief executive of one company, when I became the chairman, if he had a mentor, a coach or anybody outside who was giving him support. He said, "Yes", and I said, "Who is it?", because it is quite useful to know what other inputs there are. He looked across the table and said, "You." I realised at that point that he was quite lost, so I gave him a lot of support and help. The reality was—as I told him—"If you want to have a meeting with 'You', your reputation rests on the fact that you've got to find out which hole you are on. That really won't do." With that simple little message, all his behaviour changed and he started paying a lot more attention. Then we talked about things. You work together and you understand the issues. If it is not going to work out, then you reach a sensible conclusion. Happily, in this case, that is not the issue. The issue here is that we have fantastic people. Unlike some of the other places that I have come into where there is a problem, this is one where the engine is running and the car is travelling in the right direction.

Q10 Stephen Mosley: I have a slightly different question. You have HAD a long and very successful career across industry. One of the things that you need in the MRC is to avoid any conflicts of interest. Do you have any?

Donald Brydon: The only area where there could be the tiniest conflict is that Smiths Group make some medical devices—things like syringes, tracheotomy tubes and so on. We can put in place a simple rule that keeps me from any issue of procurement, but the chairman is not going to get involved in deciding which needles are bought for the laboratories. Beyond that, there is nothing at all.

Q11 Hywel Williams: Good morning. I am a social scientist fighting to keep my end up here against all these real ones scattered round the room. I was going to ask you something about commanding the confidence of the MRC and the scientific community in general, but I think you might have answered that in respect of Mr Metcalfe's question. Taking this matter a bit further, from where would you be getting your scientific support and advice? I know that the Council has a 50:50 split between people who are appropriately scientifically qualified. Would you be turning to them or would you be turning outside for your advice?

Donald Brydon: You would do both. To be successful in any of these jobs, you have to be a good networker. Having a network of people that you can turn to for advice, second opinions and just to check that what you have heard is right, is the sensible thing to do. In fact, you should do that in every walk of life. In the FTSE 100 companies, I spend time going to see the auditor on the quiet, and other people, always to triangulate what I am hearing. One of the curious things about being the chairman of anything—and it

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took me a while to learn this, to be honest—is that you are quite powerful. Therefore, you don't always get people telling you exactly how it is the first time, so you do have to go and do a bit of triangulation. You have to do that inside and outside, but not in a way that suggests you don't trust people. It is simply that you need a hinterland of knowledge to be able to make judgments.

Q12 Hywel Williams: There is a balance to be struck, I suppose. I have an interest in a medical organisation, and I think the chairman has been captured by the organisation itself; he really seems to be sinking. As you say, there is a balance to be struck, is there not?

Donald Brydon: Yes. My favourite example of trying to find out things was in one company in the US where the opening question was, "What's keeping you awake at night?" The answer was, "Nothing we can't handle, Sir." As they formed up as a bunch of US Marines, you knew you were going to get no information at all, so you had to go somewhere else to get the information. They would have captured me and sent me home, telling me that everything was fine and dandy. As it happened, it wasn't, but I found that out a different way.

Q13 Sarah Newton: I was interested in your opening comments about your motivation in wanting to take on this role. You said you were looking forward to something that was taking a longer-term view and not just dealing with the here and now. What do you think are the challenges facing you in your new role over the next few years, such as the political and scientific challenges?

Donald Brydon: The political challenges are going to be about money, I suspect. We need to ensure that we go on funding research in this country and being a world leader in this field. At a time when there are great pressures, making sure that the funding is secured will be one of the major challenges.

I do not want to give the wrong impression. In business life, particularly in quoted companies, you do feel under continuous and very short-term pressure from the shareholders. Yesterday we had a board meeting. It was all about investing in sales forces in Asia, and the fact that the investment will hurt the earnings of the relevant company for the next couple of years. One of the strongest arguments was, "The shareholders won't like this. The earnings won't be growing quite as fast as they otherwise would." We were saying, "No, we've got to do the right thing because in five years from now people will be very pleased that we did this." In any other place you would think that was a pretty sensible and obvious decision, but that debate was intense because there were many other motivations. At least in this field you want to turn the research into something worthwhile, and as quickly as possible, and you have to recognise that some medical research takes a long time; it is not simply a matter of the next quarter's earnings. The sense of having some of those shackles slightly loosened is quite attractive.

Q14 Sarah Newton: Absolutely. How would you go about the whole process of developing a strategy for the organisation over, say, the next five years?

Donald Brydon: It has a strategy already, and that is the starting place. It is very important to realise that it is not the chairman's job to develop the strategy. It is the chief executive's job to develop the strategy and the chairman's job to help him. In any organisation, the chief executive and the executive have to own the strategy completely. My job is to test the strategy, make suggestions and propose adaptations, lead the debate and allow all the voices to be properly heard, but it is not to make the strategy itself.

Q15 Chair: In your answer to Sarah Newton, you talked about research in the UK. One of the MRC's strategic aims is: "To support global health research that addresses the inequalities in health which arise particularly in developing countries." Of course, a lot of that involves the placement of people and the financing of projects in developing countries. We, ourselves, saw some of this in Uganda and Tanzania recently. I have to say that we saw some world-class science undertaken by projects. One that really did spring to mind—I have spoken to the relevant Minister about this—was north of Dar es Salaam where there was a partnership between MRC and the Gates Foundation, which was doing some fabulous work. We have not published our report on that yet. When we do, we might just make some comment about the things we saw as weaknesses in the mechanism that supports the brilliant scientists working abroad for us.

How will you ensure that the MRC works effectively with its international partners in its attempts to address those global problems, which is at the big end of the spectrum? At the individual end, how will you go about ensuring that the people for whom you are directly responsible, in terms of funding programmes, get the support they need?

Donald Brydon: Again, running the mechanisms is the job of the executive and not the chairman. I simply don't know enough yet about what we do in Uganda, the Gambia and so on, to know exactly the problems to which you are referring. If you write a report about that and there are some issues in it, then part of my job is to make sure that those questions are properly addressed and the Council is completely satisfied with the answers.

In any global business the board faces the problem of the governance of remote operations. That is a challenge everywhere. You try to see people and you have reports and audits going on. You have all the normal checks and balances of business. Unless I knew what the precise issues were, I am not sure I would know how to answer your question directly. In the third point I made just now about the role of the chairman, making sure that the governance is in the right shape is a core of this whole role. I don't know that I can go much further at this point.

Q16 Chair: Not in terms of the things that we might raise as individual issues, but at a strategic level you will be at the forefront of some of the key discussions

determining what our priorities are and who our partners ought to be.

Donald Brydon: Yes. It's back to the same questions that you would have anywhere. It is to do with opportunity and risk: making sure that the analysis and the work has been done well to identify the opportunity; that the purpose is clear in that it fits with the strategy and the risks are identified; and then you determine whether you want to take those risks or mitigate those risks. That framework works for most decisions of that sort.

Q17 Hywel Williams: I want to ask you about your relationship with governments on a devolved level. A large amount of funding, in Welsh terms, at least, goes to the Welsh Government. They have substantial responsibilities in terms of health, and many fewer responsibilities in terms of research into health. Can you, broadly, give us an idea of how you see the relationship between the MRC and the devolved Administrations or Governments?

Donald Brydon: Being really truthful, no, I can't. I honestly do not know anything about the detailed relationship between the MRC and the devolved Administrations. Clearly, that is going to be an issue on the agenda over the next year or two. These are subjects that I have to get my head around before October. At this point, I do not know how the mechanisms work. I'm sorry.

Q18 Hywel Williams: Thank you for being very candid. The other issue that intrigues me as a Welsh MP and as a Plaid Cymru MP is the division of research funding between the various centres. Obviously, some people believe that rather too much of the money goes to the usual suspects. Do you have any opinion on striking the balance between thrusting new research departments who are fighting for money and not getting it, possibly in their own view, and funding people who have a proven track record?

Donald Brydon: What matters is that there is a good gateway process to determine the decisions. If that gateway process is clear and transparent, based on good data and not anecdote, and you hold excellence, the probability of success and other factors as the guiding principles, then precisely where it is located is a secondary question. I hope that is how it works. Certainly it would be my view that if we do not always try to do what is best we will probably be sub-optimal and less successful.

Q19 Pamela Nash: Good morning, Mr Brydon. Despite the resource budget of the MRC being protected by the Government, the capital expenditure has been slashed—and it will be over the next few years—so difficult choices will have to be made at the MRC. What do you see as your role if you take up this position in negotiations with the Government in relation to resources over the next few years?

Donald Brydon: First of all, we have to have a policy. Once the Council has determined what its policy is, then I am an advocate for that policy into Government, along with other people. I am not the only voice. Again, the networking, the advocacy and

the persuasion is a key part of what the chairman has to do.

Q20 Pamela Nash: Do you have experience in undertaking a role like that before?

Donald Brydon: The Royal Mail has taught me quite a lot about trying to get things done. It would be fair to say that three-and-a-bit years ago, when I started with the Royal Mail, nobody thought that we would have had a solution to the Royal Mail's pension problem done, that Brussels would have approved it, that we would have abolished the regulator, that we would have a new system of regulation or that the company would be profitable and cash-flow positive for the first time for a very long time. Clearly, I have done something right. They have re-appointed me, so I think there is some evidence that advocacy, networking and hard work pays off.

Q21 Pamela Nash: I have been on this Committee for two years now. We have a lot of interaction with the research councils and we have seen the evolving relationship between those councils. What do you think your role will be in communications and working with the other research councils?

Donald Brydon: I would be very surprised if there is not a strong network of research council chairmen. I would also be very surprised if we cannot all learn from each other from time to time. There has, clearly, already been some co-operation in the back-office areas that has been driven through. Also, the individual research councils have very clear and precise disciplines which they adhere to. As I have discovered in moving from different industries, these disciplines are all genuinely different and there are subtle differences as to how they play out. It is both a combination of the particular for each and where there is common interest.

Q22 Chair: Following on from your track record in Royal Mail in terms of addressing some of the back-office issues that were not all that effective, and I am being gentle in my words—

Donald Brydon: That's the nicest thing anyone has said to me.

Chair:—if you started looking at the back-office operations in the joint service centres and were unhappy about it, given your expertise elsewhere, how would you go about persuading your fellow chairs that what they think they have invested in as very good could be approached slightly differently?

Donald Brydon: If that were true, it would have to be evidence based. If I could not produce the evidence to show that it could be done in a better way and persuade them, then I guess I would have failed. Evidence is the answer. It has to be.

Q23 Chair: Yes. It has cost them a lot to get where they are. The question is whether it is going to cost them too much in the longer run.

Donald Brydon: I have not seen the detail at all. Obviously, it has to be a fact-based analysis of how it works and what the probabilities are of the costs moving in particular directions in future.

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The Royal Mail is quite an interesting parallel in some ways, but a very different world in others. Currently we handle about 20 million items a day fewer than we were doing three years ago when I became chairman. All of the assumptions about the modernisation of Royal Mail are having to change because, three years ago, parcels were just beginning to grow. Now parcels are the fastest growth part of the business. Parcels don't go through flat letter machines, so the capex involved is totally different. The modernisation shape is now required to be totally different. The only way to navigate through it—I am using this as a parallel but it is not the same—is to have the very best analysis of what is likely to happen next and what the costs associated with that are going to be. The same is probably true of all processes and all the systems, but the scale is completely different, of course.

Q24 Stephen Metcalfe: As we have heard, we know that money is tight and that the MRC has done relatively better than some of the other research councils. Do you see increasing the amount of commercial activity that the MRC undertakes as a way of bridging that shortfall? Is that something you would be driving or just supporting?

Donald Brydon: It is clear that translation is a really important priority for the MRC. To my mind, it is almost impossible to imagine how anybody would think it was otherwise. The more that can be commercialised successfully, the better it is for the country, for human health and for the budgets, and probably in that order. It is not a financially-driven objective, but it is desirable because it is the right thing to do. After all, what is the point of all this research if it doesn't end up improving somebody's health?

Q25 Stephen Metcalfe: Do you feel that the MRC has been good at that so far in actually transferring that technology out into industry?

Donald Brydon: From what I know, I am impressed with much of what it has done. But I am sure a lot more can be done, and the MRC has that ambition.

Q26 Stephen Metcalfe: How will you go about making sure, in relation to what you are commercialising and transferring into industry, that you are getting the right value for that?

Donald Brydon: We are back to having good measures of outputs and good processes. I am really impressed by what I have read and seen of what has been going on in terms of more and more measurement, more and more reporting, developing the longer-term database which gives you indicators of what is likely to be successful and what is less likely to be successful and so on. It all starts with good output measures, then good process, good monitoring and good systems behind it.

Q27 Stephen Metcalfe: As to the difference between a commercial business where there is a very structured hierarchy and everyone is subordinate to the person above them, in the main, do you see the Medical Research Council being different in that those who are creating this intellectual property may not see

themselves as subordinate to you, other than seeing you as the over-arching structure that allows the research in the first place to be done? So, effectively, it is "their" intellectual property that you are selling on their behalf?

Donald Brydon: It is a different skill, but when I chaired Taylor Nelson Sofres, a market-research company, I don't think that any of the market researchers saw themselves as subordinate to me. They were almost, intellectually, like sole traders, dealing in information for whom the academic quality of their information was more important than anything to do with the company and whether we made a profit from using that information or not. I am familiar with that scenario. What you have to do is to try and have everybody aligned so that their own aspirations and expectations are satisfied inside a structure which allows the whole organisation's aspirations and expectations to be satisfied. That, absolutely, can be done. You don't have to have everybody with exactly the same motive all day every day. What gets one guy out of bed to work is quite different from what gets another guy out of bed to work. I also think that the command and control structure of management, anyway, is dead. All management is now about collaboration, persuasion, carrying your colleagues with you and so on, in whatever organisation it is.

Q28 Hywel Williams: We have just seen a leading pharmacological company fined a shade under £2 billion for its nefarious activities, albeit some time ago, and I think reputational damage has been done to the industry as a whole. What is your assessment of the implications and, indeed, the perils for the MRC if they extend into commercial activity from this piece of history, if it is still just history?

Donald Brydon: It is all about monitoring and good process. It all comes back to the same things: good controls, good analysis of risk, good data, good process and good judgment. The Council's role and the chair's role is to make sure that the framework is in place that gives you the best chance of not having bad outcomes. It is a shame. It was not just British companies. It was a worldwide phenomenon. At the end of the day, the MRC's role is to promote the research and the science that, in the end, improves human health. If we focus on doing our bit of it well and put in place the right transparency and controls, then we should be doing as well as it is reasonable to do.

Q29 Sarah Newton: I would empathise and agree with you that leadership and management is about collaboration and persuasion, not command and control. The Committee looked into the Francis Crick Institute. I think most people are interested to know what that partnership and collaboration might achieve. Of course, it comes with a big price tag. Given that we are so resource-constrained, and bearing in mind the full commitment from the MRC to the Francis Crick Institute, are you concerned at all about the £100 million running costs, how achievable that is and how well it can be managed, because it is such a collaborative enterprise?

Donald Brydon: It is fantastic, is it not, that we are going to have a world-class centre in the UK of this sort and with collaboration and co-operation? There is no doubt that I will be taking such a serious interest in it because it has a series of issues to do with control and governance that will play right into the heart of what I do. I would expect to be very chairmanical about Crick, but I think it is a fantastic opportunity. The early signs are that people are driving very collaboratively in the right direction.

Q30 Stephen Metcalfe: On the Francis Crick Institute, we would all agree that it is a fantastic institution. I had some concerns about its location being in Brill Place, near St Pancras, and the fact that, because of the constraints of the location, it was going to cost the best part of £600 million to set up. Did you have any concerns as to that? Do you think it was worth that price tag to put it where it is, or could that money have been better spent on the research itself?

Donald Brydon: I am best focused on the future. It is done. It is a decision that has been made.

Q31 Stephen Metcalfe: But you are allowed to have an opinion on whether or not you think that was a good decision.

Donald Brydon: I have not looked at what the options and alternatives might otherwise have been. For me, it is something that is there and it is a given from which I start. If it produces the right atmosphere and the success and all the optimism is fulfilled, then it will have been a brilliant decision. If it turns out that it does not find anything at all—that it is of no value—then it would have been a lousy decision. It is going to take a while to find that out. I do not think the primary question is whether it is in St Pancras or not. The primary question is whether it is sensible to have this type of big collaboration—

Q32 Stephen Metcalfe: Other than the cost as to it being on such a site.

Donald Brydon: I understand that.

Q33 Stephen Mosley: I know that when we were looking at the Francis Crick Institute, one of the concerns that came out was the potential for cost overruns. How involved will you be in terms of delivering it on cost, on budget and on time? The other area where we had some concern was from people who were not involved in it, from outside of London. Would resources be concentrated in one place and how does that affect research elsewhere?

Donald Brydon: On the first issue, I will be holding the chief executive to account for it. I am not the driver for making sure that a project works on time or on budget. What I am responsible for is making sure that the people who are responsible for it do it. That is clear.

As to the second question on resources being concentrated in London, the MRC funds research over a vast array in this country and overseas, as you say. It is important that part of the advocacy role makes a point about how this is a Britain-wide effort and that it is not just a London effort. That is important for the

image and enthusiasm of scientists in other parts of the country as well.

Q34 Sarah Newton: I would like to pick up on that point. I represent a constituency in Cornwall. We do have world-class medical research because we have the University of Exeter Medical School there. One of the thoughts I would leave you with, going into your role, is that this research funding given to organisations is transformative to the communities because of the academics attracted there. There is a knock-on benefit to the community. Perhaps you could give some thought, for a moment, when you are considering the allocation of resources—I appreciate that excellence has to come first—to the very powerful effect of having some of that money going to centres around the country. Hywel has the same concern. It would have benefit in addition to the research, in addition to that value, for the wider community. I would encourage you to think about that when you are looking into the future and to the strategy, not only globally when working with partners in developing countries, but to look at parts of the UK that do not usually get so much of the funding that is available.

Donald Brydon: I will. One of the objectives that I read concerns bringing health to the whole of society, and that is part of it.

Sarah Newton: Because it is often in the regions where we have the greatest health inequalities in our communities.

Q35 Chair: We have talked a lot about health but we have not actually talked about the national health service. In terms of the relationship between the research programme and the objectives of the MRC, is the NHS an asset or a problem?

Donald Brydon: This I am going to find out. It is very clear that part of the role is collaboration, and working with the national health service for the MRC is key. So there is the NIHR, OSCHR, the MRC and the need to collaborate. We have got a fantastic resource in the national health service. It is not obvious to me why, definitionally, it would be a problem.

Q36 Chair: One of the issues that has been raised with me, particularly by some private sector research organisations, is that the revised structure of the NHS is going to make it more and more difficult to work in areas like stratified medicines where good datasets across the nation can be put together. You are going to come into an area that could be in conflict with the structure of the NHS. How are you going to knock heads together to make sure that next-generation research is possible within the constraints of the structure?

Donald Brydon: I don't like saying all the time that I don't know, but I have not yet studied what those problems are. Until I do, I do not know the answer to your question properly. Again, I live in hope that you start with a rational world. If the consequences are that the new structure militates in some way against cross-strand research of some sort, then you would sit down with the relevant people and try to work out a

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mechanism to join the pieces up in a different way from the way they are today to achieve the objective.

Q37 Chair: Presumably, you would see the sitting down with people to include privately funded corporate research as well? It is all about the good of the health of the nation.

Donald Brydon: I would imagine that you would sit down with whoever could help solve the problem in the most effective way and try to find the most effective solution. In everything I have done, I have found that people of goodwill, in the end, will try to find a solution to a problem, but if you start at the ideological end of it you probably will not get started. If the issue is, "We are spending some money on something. It is not being effective because it is being dissipated in different directions. It would be better if it was re-co-ordinated in some way", you have that debate and you discuss. But, I repeat. I do not have a going-in position. I do not know what the issues are, so I am not pre-judging.

Q38 Chair: Let me take you forward a few years—you and I are of the same generation—to a time when you are just about to hang up your boots and retire. What would you like to have achieved as chairman of the MRC?

Donald Brydon: If the MRC is still held in as high regard as it is today or even higher, that would be fantastic. Why would it be so? Because it had made progress along its major axes. It had shown that more research had been translated into drugs that had actually ended up helping to cure illnesses; that it had found some major steps on the road to changing health patterns and whatever in the world or in the UK, and that the UK was still an absolutely leading centre for scientific research in this field. That would be a pretty good epitaph.

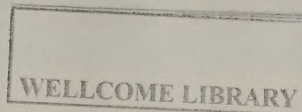
Q39 Chair: With the exception of the exact reciprocals of those, what would failure look like?

Donald Brydon: Great big rows, funding being cut and people losing confidence that we were the best.

Q40 Chair: But you are confident that is not going to be the case?

Donald Brydon: I don't think I would take the job if I thought that was going to be the case.

Chair: I thank you very much for your attendance this morning. It has been most interesting. The Committee will now go into private session and consider our report on this morning's interview.



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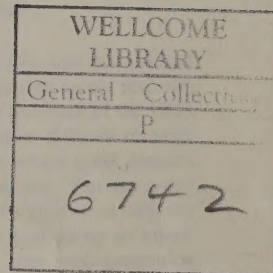
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